

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 211433
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TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
INFO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

UNCLAS STATE 211433

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CG, PINS

SUBJECT: DAVIDLAMB ARTICLE ON KOLWEZI

1. AUGUST 18 EDITION OF WASHINGTON POST CARRIED LENGTHY ARTICLE DATED KOLWEZI BY LOS ANGELES TIMES CORRESPONDENT DAVID LAMB ENTITLED "KOLWEZI'S COLONIAL IDYLL IS OVER" SUBTITLED "FEARFUL WHITES NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN TO BATTLE-SCARRED ZAIRE TOWN."
2. ARTICLE BEGINS ON SOMBRE NOTE -- "A DEATHLY STILLNESS HANGS OVER KOLWEZI, WHERE 800 BLACKS AND WHITES FOUND RACIAL EQUALITY IN AN UNMARKED COMMON GRAVE." UNATTRIBUTED INTERVIEWS FOLLOW WHICH, SUMMED UP, CAST DOUBTS ON LIKELIHOOD THAT EXPATRIATES WILL RETURN.
3. PRINCIPAL EXCERPTS FOLLOW: "THE SUN BEATS DOWN ON EMPTY STREETS. THE PLAYGROUNDS OF SHUTTERED SCHOOLS ARE

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DESERTED. THE LOOTED STORES ARE CLOSED. THE BULLET-RIDDLED EUROPEAN HOMES ARE ABANDONED. IT IS A PLACE ALMOST WITHOUT SOUND OR MOVEMENT. EVEN THE DOGS ARE DEAD. I'M NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT THERE'S ANY PLACE LEFT HERE FOR THE EUROPEAN," SAID ONE OF THE 17 WHITES REMAINING IN KOLWEZI AFTER THE MID-MAY INVASION BY ANGOLA-BASED REBELS.

IT CLAIMED THE LIVES OF 136 WHITES AND ABOUT 700 BLACKS.

"THE SECURITY'S BETTER IN TOWN THAN IT WAS THREE WEEKS AGO, BUT I DON'T THINK THE AFRICANS WANT US HERE ANYMORE" HE SAID. THAT'S THE BIG THING. WE'RE NOT WELCOME. THE FEELING IS MORE AND MORE UNCOMFORTABLE. YOU SENSE IT, YOU FEEL IT. I'VE BEEN HERE 10 YEARS BUT THERE'S NO FUTURE FOR ME ANY MORE. BEFORE THE INVASION, KOLWEZI HAD A WHITE POPULATION OF 2,500, MOST OF THEM BELGIAN WORKERS IN THE COPPER MINES. MANY WERE TECHNICIANS, SHORT ON EDUCATION BUT LONG ON EXPERIENCE. THEIR ENTRENCHED PRESENCE AND THEIR DISRESPECT FOR THE AFRICAN WERE ACUTELY RESENTED. THEY WERE WHAT IS KNOWN IN AFRICA AS "THE OLD BOYS," THE VESTIGE OF AN ERA IN WHICH EVEN AN UNEDUCATED EUROPEAN LIVED BETTER, MADE MORE MONEY AND ENJOYED HIGHER RANK AND PRIVILEGE THAN AN EDUCATED AFRICAN.

"THIS WASN'T A NEOCOLONIAL TOWN," A ZAIRIAN MINE EXECUTIVE SAID. IT WAS A COLONIAL TOWN. NOTHING HAD CHANGED. IT WAS A TOWN FOR WHITES, NOT BLACKS. THE OLD BOYS TREATED THEIR ZAIRIAN ASSISTANTS IN THE MINES LIKE THEIR HOUSEBOYS.

WHILE MOST AFRICANS LIVED IN THE SPRAWLING BLACK QUARTERS, CAREFULLY TUCKED AWAY AND NOT VISIBLE TO THE UNCLASSIFIED

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CASUAL VISITOR, THE WHITES LIVED IN HANDSOME STUCCO HOMES ALONG THE GRACIOUS, TREE-LINED BOULEVARDS. THEY VACATIONED IN EUROPE, BANKED SUBSTANTIAL PORTIONS OF THEIR SALARIES AND LIVED MORE COMFORTABLY THAN THEY COULD HAVE IN EUROPE.

TODAY THEIR HOMES ARE EMPTY, STRIPPED BARE BY THE LOOTING ZAIRIAN ARMY SOLDIERS WHO RANSACKED KOLWEZI AFTER THE INVASION, LOADING STOLEN PROPERTY INTO TRUCKS, THEN TRANSPORTING IT IN U.S.-MADE C130S TO KINSHASA, THE CAPITAL WHERE EVERYTHING FROM EUROPEAN CARS TO STEREOS IS NOW AVAILABLE ON THE BLACK MARKET. THE ONLY CONTRIBUTION THE SOLDIERS MADE DURING OR AFTER THE INVASION RESIDENTS SAID, WAS TO SHOOT THE DOGS.

IF THE 40,000 MAN ZAIRIAN ARMY IS LITTLE MORE THAN A MOB WITH GUNS, ITS CONDUCT IS PARTLY EXPLAINABLE BY THE FACT THAT IT IS AN ARMY WITH AN EMPTY STOMACH. THE ARMY WAS PAID IN JULY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE MONTHS. WITH COMMANDERS OFTEN SELLING FOOD INTENDED FOR THEIR TROOPS, THE DOLS 35 A MONTH PRIVATE TERRORIZES THE POPULATION TO SURVIVE - STEALING, ROBBING LOOTING.

THE BIGGEST FEAR OF BLACK AND WHITE CIVILIANS IN SHABA PROVINCE IS NOT THE KATANGESE REBELS FROM ANGOLA. IT IS THE ZAIRIAN SOLDIERS. AND A PRIME RESPONSIBILITY OF THE 2,300 MAN INTER-AFRICAN FORCE STATIONED IN SHABA IS TO PROTECT THE ZAIRIAN CIVILIANS FROM THEIR OWN SOLDIERS.

SOME OF THE ZAIRE UNITS WERE SO UNDISCIPLINED THAT THEY WERE DISARMED BY ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES. OTHERS ARE BEING RETRAINED BY THE FRENCH AND BELGIANS ESSENTIALLY A REALLY FUTILE EFFORT UNLESS THE TROOPS ARE PAID AND FED REGULARLY.

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UNLIKE THE ZAIRIANS, THE INTER-AFRICAN FORCE IN SHABA, SPEARHEADED BY 1,500 MOROCCANS, HAS OVERCOME EARLY SKEPTICISM AND EARNED THE RESPECT OF BOTH BLACKS AND WHITES. THE FORCE, WHICH INCLUDES 600 SENEGALESE, 140 TOGOLESE, 45 GABONESE AND A MEDICAL DETACHMENT FROM THE IVORY COAST, HAS PROVED ITSELF TO BE DISCIPLINED, PROFESSIONAL AND MILITARILY EFFECTIVE IN DEALING WITH A VOLATILE SITUATION.

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A DOZEN OR SO MINING EXECUTIVES FLY INTO KOLWEZI DAILY FROM LUBUMBASHI, 150 MILES EAST, BUT THEY DO NOT SPEND THE NIGHT.

DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN KINSHASA ESTIMATE THAT HALF OF THE 14,000 OR SO EXPATRIATES FLED SHABA PROVINCE DURING THE FIGHTING. SOME, HOWEVER, MERELY TOOK EARLY VACATIONS AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW HOW MANY WILL RETURN, BELGIAN OFFICIALS SAID. THEIR RETURN IS A SUBJECT OF NEGOTIATIONS, BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF ZAIRE AND BELGIUM. CLEARLY, ZAIRIANS DO NOT WANT BELGIANS TO RETURN TO MINING JOBS THAT THEY TEHEMSELVES ARE CAPABLE OF FILLING.

FOR NOW, THOUGH, KOLWEZI - ONCE A TOWN OF 145,000, STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE WITH ONLY FOOD FROM THE RED CROSS
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PREVENTING MASS STARVATION. IT IS A TOWN SCARRED AND
CRIPPLED BY THE SIX-DAY OCCUPATION OF AN INVADING FORCE
AND OF ITS OWN SOLDIERS, A TOWN WHOSE FUTURE IS AS

UNCERTAIN AS THE IDENTITY OF ITS DEAD.

NEXT WEEK THE 800 DEAD WILL BE REMOVED BY SWISS AUTHORIT-
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AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

UNCLAS STATE 211433

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 211433 SENT ACTION KINSHASA INFO
LUBUMBASHI AUG 19.

QUOTE: UNCLAS STATE 211433

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Secure: OPEN
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To: KINSHASA
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